DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 275 008 CS 505 343

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TITLE A Speech Fundamentals Odyssey.
PUB DATE 30 Apr 86
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association (77th, Atlantic City, NJ, April 30-May 3, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Curriculum; *Curriculum Development; *Departments; Educational Change; Higher Education; *Speech Communication; *Speech Curriculum
IDENTIFIERS *Millersville University PA

ABSTRACT

Presenting an historical overview of the development of speech courses at Millersville University (Pennsylvania), this paper analyzes the past, present, and future status of speech communication within the context of the general education curriculum. The historical perspective treats the origins and definition of speech as a college course offering; traces its development in the curriculum and its relationship to pedagogy, radio, television, and public speaking; and chronicles the rise and fall of the speech major. The contemporary view of the speech department explores the implications of three considerations: faculty changes, a departmental name change, and the suggested revision of the campus-wide general education curriculum. Looking to the future, the paper explores indications that point to the disappearance of the required speech course and the creation of mass lectures and multiple section laboratories to cover the backlog of students needing to take the course, with a possible reduction in faculty. (JK)

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A SPEECH FUNDAMENTALS ODYSSEY

By

H. L. Drake

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A paper presented at the Eastern Communication Association,
Atlantic City, April 30, 1986.

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A SPEECH FUNDAMENTALS ODYSSEY

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I. Historical Perspective:

"Speech", in one form or another, seems to have been a required course at Millersville University since its beginning.

In 1855, Millersville's opening year as a school, "Reading and Elocution" was required. Millersville's first name was the "Lancaster County Normal Institute" and the first reading and elocution teacher was Cornelius Walker, A.M.

The 1902:1903 Forty-Ninth Annual Catalogue describes the English department's "reading" course as including elocution, declamation and pronunciation.

"Speech" as a course title at Millersville University first appeared in the May, 1937 college catalog as a three semester hour course meeting three times per week. This course was offered by the English Department and included "Voice Dramatization, Remedial Speech, etc." A year later, the Millersville State Teachers College Journal added "Modern Drama" as a two semester hour course meeting twice a week. "English III" was listed as stressing "oral and written composition of an advanced nature." Prior to 1937 the Millersville English Department had offered a two semester hour course in "Oral Expression" and a three semester hour course in "Dramatic English." The "Oral Expression" course had been required of all curricula and the four-year curriculum for teachers of Kindergarten and the first three primary grades required a sixth

semester "Speech Problems" course worth two semester hours.

According to the 1949 school catalog the English department was offering two semesters of "Fundamentals of Speech" at three semester hours per course. Also in 1949, "Radio Education" was a course listed in the English department and taught by Miss Esther E. Lenhardt. The May, 1950 catalog provides the following information on page 88: "In November 1949 the MSTC Radio Association was organized for the purpose of cultivating interest in radio and electronics. The association assists students desiring to obtain amateur radio operator's licenses, and maintains a radio broadcasting station on the campus. It is in frequent contact with radio amateurs throughout the world."

Miss Sheaffer was listed in the May, 1955 catalog as teaching the 3 semester hour course, "Radio and Television In Education." (p 71) This course description was the same as that for the "Radio In Education" course: "Uses of radio in education. Practice in writing continuity for scripts; study radio techniques; cultivation of radio voice. Broadcasting experience in local stations."(May, 1949, p 45)

In 1951 Speech I and Speech II were required courses. In 1953 and 1954 the English Department did not offer "Speech" courses by title, but, included public speaking in "Composition I" and "Composition II." These composition courses dealt with "four language skills"; i. e., reading, writing, speaking and listening. In the May, 1955 catalog "Speech I" and "Speech II" were back.

The 1956-1958 catalog listed "Speech 11" and "Speech 12" offered by the English Department in place of the above Speech

"I" and "II" courses.

In the early 1960's two semesters of "Speech" were required at Millersville. Speech #11 was a two semester hour course featuring "informative" types of public presentations, including each teacher's favorite units such as oral interpretation and speech pathology. Speech #12 was the second required course of two semester hours and was devoted almost exclusively to "persuasive" messages, including small group discussion and speeches to convince and to actuate. Eight to a dozen sections of each course were provided in Fall and Winter/Spring terms and these courses counted as general education credits. Speech Faculty were still members of the English Department in the early '60's with half composition and half speech teaching loads.

According to the January, 1968 catalog (p 105) a "Department of Speech And Drama" was established separately from the English Department. The faculty listed in the Department of Speech And Drama were: Cumpston, Tally, Iseman, Muench, Garmen and Wright. In an interview with the author of this paper, a former Speech And Drama department chairman, Mr. Charles Muench stated that the new Department of Speech And Drama was established as a result of a general education curriculum revision in 1967.

According to Muench, the new Department of Speech And Drama offered a three semester required course in general education titled, "Fundamentals Of Speech." This course featured informative and persuasive speeches and each teacher could also include favorite units such as oral interpretation, humorous speaking and speech pathology. The January, 1968 catalog (p 105) shows (p 105) the new department's offerings as:

SP109	Remedial Speech	0 Semester Hours
SP111	Speech I	2 S.H.
SP210	Fundamentals of Speech	3 S.H.
SP212	Speech II	2 S.H.
SP225	Play Production	3 to 6 S. H.
SP327	Modern Drama	3 S.H.
SP330	Speech Problems	3 S.H.

The 1976-1978 catalog indicates that there was no major in Speech but "students may enroll in an interdepartmental program leading to teaching certification in Communication Arts"(p 105). The departments listed for this B.S. Ed degree were (p 51): Education Media, English, Secondary Education and the Department of Speech And Drama. In the 1978-1980 catalog there was still no speech major listed but "students may elect a Speech minor or area of concentration within other degree programs."(p 99)

A non-education B.S. in Speech Communications was added in 1981. This is when a major became available and according to the 1982-1984 catalog(p 109) the liberal arts degree program in Speech Communications had a common core with six emphasis areas: acting, directing, stage design, tehnical theatre, broadcasting and Speech Communication. The 1984-1986 catalog (p 44) lists a Bachelor of Science degree in "Speech Communications." In 1986, the department added a Public Relations track.

No new majors in the B.S. in Communication Arts were accepted beginning in the Fall of 1983. The degree has been phased out. This latter came about as a result of an appreciable reduction in Education Department majors.

According to former Speech And Drama department chairman Muench, the required general education public speaking course became a "hybrid" course around 1978. That is, "interpersonal

communicating" was included in the course. The rationale for the change, according to Muench, was the tenor of the times along with a beginning in de-emphasizing secondary education. There was thinking among Speech And Drama Department faculty that non-education majors didn't need public speaking as much as they needed training in one-to-one and small group communicating. This time-frame also was a period of increased thinking along liberal arts lines.

Since at least the early 1960's Monroe's motivated sequence has been used by the Millersville speech faculty in the basic course. The faculty has sought a common-ground for the basic course and decided that the motivated sequence was suited for that purpose.

II. Contemporary Aspects:

The school year 1985-1986 has been a marker year for our department for several reasons, three of which are pertinent to the considerations in this paper.

First, our department chairman of several years, Mr. Charles Muench, resigned to accept the administrative position of Assistant Provost at MU. A previous department chair, Mr. Robert Fogg, has been re-elected and is interested in establishing some of his additional or new ideas relative to the curriculum. No value judgments are being suggested here except to say that at best, such a logistical change can require some shifts in departmental emphases for faculty as well as students.

Second, as of January, 1986, the Department Of Speech And Drama had its name changed to the "Communication And Theatre Department." This name change has caused some campus-wide

confusion. As of yet, some people don't know that we have a new department name. Still others in the faculty and staff seem to be shaken because we have adopted the word "Communication" in our title. It's a matter of semantics; the word "communication" has been used freely by some departments, support staff and administrators for several years. Along with a department name change came a new track called "Public Relations." The administration's Public Relations Office is having trouble with this. The bottom-line rationale for the department's name change is a reflection of what might be called a departmental updating of major tracks to reflect where our majors seem to be likely to obtain non-teaching jobs; e. g., broadcasting, "public relations" work. No employers are expressing interest in traditional speech; e. g., the history of rhetoric and public address. Theatre is hanging on. However, it may be reflecting the tenor of the times, more than any other track in our department.

Third, and seemingly the most thorny problem currently, is a suggested revision of the campus-wide general education curriculum. This review was begun six years ago and some administrators are expressing concern that a revision be completed if for no other reason than to accomodate what some think the accreditation organizations will look upon with favor. One faculty senator recently stated that Central States accreditation is looking for a revision simply because Millersville University told them a few years ago that we would have one! The basic speech course at Millersville is very much involved.

The current General Education Curriculum Review Committee

has turned in reports which recommend that any basic speech course be deleted from campus-wide requirements. What compounds our department problem even further is that the General Education Committee recommends that "oral communications components" be included in various courses and departments to satisfy student needs in oral communicating.

Thus, we are currently in a position of attempting to make a case for a basic speech course remaining in a revised general education curriculum and at the same time, establishing that no other department should take it upon themselves to fulfill our oral communication duties! An example of this is the English Department insisting on an additional Term of required composition which will include oral communicating.

The proposition for curriculum reform, including deleting speech,is before the Faculty Senate. One administrative intrusion has already caused the Senate to negate its progress on certain segments of the proposed curriculum change, reverse course and in effect, start all over again. The charge was that after two meetings the Faculty Senate wasn't making progress and showing itself to be incapable of handling the situation.

III. The Future:

The General Education Curriculum Committee recommendations have caused some rethinking in the Communication And Theatre Department regarding the basic speech course. The criticism of too many courses offered to fulfill the basic course was considered as valid. Effective Fall, 1986, there will be no course replacing the required basic speech course.

Another problem worrying the department and a nuisance for the entire campus in the past few years is at last being addressed. For years, too many students have been turned away from the basic speech course although approximately sixteen sections are offered every Fall and Winter/Spring Term plus additional sections in Pre-Sessions and the two Summer Sessions.

The Communication And Theatre Department has come up with mass lectures along with increased enrollment in the multiple section laboratories as an answer for catching up with the backlog of students. Beginning with the 1986 Fall Term,students must register for one mass lecture class containing approximately 200 students meeting twice per week. Mass lecture sessions will be held twice per day Monday through Thursday. Students must also register for a "speaking laboratory" which will meet two or three times per week. Each speaking laboratory will have 42 students enrolled instead of the present 25 maximum. The basic course will remain three semester hours credit.

The mass lectures will be distributed among department faculty members and video recorded. The video recordings will serve at least two duties: (1) for students to use in the library for make ups and additional study; and,(2) for department faculty to conduct critique sessions for improvement and refining purposes. Department faculty will have some time off during the Term from class lecturing but will have more speeches to grade. There will be three speeches: to inform; to persuade and to actuate. The department will continue to offer approximately sixteen sections of the basic speech course per Fall and Winter/Spring Terms. Additional basic speech sections will be

offered in the Pre-Session and two Summer Sessions. They will be traditionally taught (without the mass lectures) and with less than 42 students per section.

It is anticipated that this mass lecture approach will be used for eighteen months to two years to accomodate the backlog of students. After a year or eighteen months, the procedure will be reviewed to ascertain advantages or disadvantages of continuing on a regular basis.

It is to be noted that a mass lecture and laboratory approach to the basic speaking course has not been an easy decision for our department to make. We are a small undergraduate liberal arts college of just over 6,000 students. We do not have graduate degree programs from which we can pull graduate students to teach the "laboratory sections."

By the way, Monroe's motivated sequence will remain the point of departure for the basic public speaking course.

IV. Conclusion:

Of course, if the end result of campus-wide general education curriculum revision is to delete the required basic speech course, the problem will be settled for our department!

The Communication And Theatre Department has been re-identified in recent years by our school dean as a "service department." This does not particularly bother most of our faculty who see a vital academic and professional need for a basic speech course required of all Millersville graduates. On our campus we are observing too many students who cannot read, write or think on their feet and speak in complete sentences.

We are also very much aware that the basic speech course is our department's bread and butter. Our different tracks for majors are tenuous at best with majors switching tracks constantly to find the easiest one or to suit their changing fancies. We are further concerned that the broadcasting track simply reflects a fad with our students, most of whom have no intentions of ever going into the business. The theatre tracks are bizzare, at best, with few students who seem to display little concern for life after campus.

Our faculty cannot help but fear that without the required basic course retrenchment may be a possibility. Other departments are undoubtedly thinking in a similar fashion.

As of this writing, it is unclear what our department's chances are of maintaining the basic speech course within any revised general education curriculum at Millersville. What makes the problem even more unsettling is that it would appear that academic and professional criteria are not the only approaches in the decision-making process. The Faculty Senate is not the last word, fortunately! The Senate seems to be on a roller coaster in predisposition and is unpredictable at best. To this time and publicly, the administration seems to be leaving the general education curriculum revision recommendations to the faculty. A house divided seems to be in operation on this matter. Territoriality and its concomitant fellow-traveler, politics, seem to also be involved. As an example, at least two departments who are written in to the General Education Committee's recommendations have already stated that they will need to increase their faculty compliment at the expense of other

departments. After a recommended general education curriculum revision leaves the faculty senate, we presume the general faculty will vote on it. Administrative suggestions will also be involved at a certain stage. It will be some time before the fundamentals speech course is out of the woods and on safe ground, if at all. Our department hopes to maintain the general education speech requirement which has a long and distinguished history at Millersville.